

Water Transportation's Time?

"Water transportation offers a means of relieving demand on heavily used roads and is a valuable extension to Boston's transportation network. For these reasons, it is important that water transportation be a priority consideration in Boston Harbor's planning and development agenda." *"Water Transportation in Boston Harbor," Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), 1989*

Following release of this 1989 study, the Charlestown-Long Wharf ferry expanded service using state subsidy during the Central Artery/North Area project. Not much else changed.

Boston's history with ferries goes back to 1631 (Charlestown) and ferries to East Boston and beyond that peaked in the late 1880s. The East Boston ferries were East Boston's only connection to Downtown until the streetcar (now Blue Line rapid transit) opened in 1904. Ferry service in Boston ended in 1953 when Mayor John B. Hynes signed legislation discontinuing all ferry service following completion of the Mystic River (now Tobin Memorial) Bridge.

The modern-day rebirth of ferry service has been slow. In January 2000, the BRA released a "Boston Inner Harbor Passenger Water Transportation Plan" prepared by TAMS Consultants. The plan described the current year-round and seasonal commuter ferry services and made some forecasts of future services. Despite population and jobs growth in Boston and particularly the Seaport District, there have been few changes in the year-round services. The Long Wharf-Quincy ferry was eliminated (the dock at Quincy deteriorated) and the Rowes Wharf-Winthrop ferry was added. A number of seasonal routes have been added (see table below).

Existing Year-Round Regional Commuter Ferries (2016)	Avg. Weekday Ridership
Long Wharf-Logan Airport-Hull/Hingham	1,080
Rowes Wharf-Hingham	3,150
Long Wharf-Charlestown Navy Yard	840
Long Wharf-Winthrop	N.A.

Water taxis operated by two companies provide year-round service in the Inner Harbor to 28 docks. Water taxis in Boston began in the 1980s.



Ferries in Comparable Cities	Annual Ridership (millions)
Total year-round Boston Harbor ferries	1.31
Hudson River Ferry (New York)	4.14
East River Ferry (New York)	1.46
Golden Gate Ferry (San Francisco)	2.47

Boston's excursion ferry system is fairly extensive, with seasonal Boston Harbor ferries serving: Boston to Provincetown; Boston to Georges, Spectacle, Peddocks and Thompson islands; Hingham and Hull to Georges, Grape, Lovells, Peddocks and Bumpkin islands.

Proposed New Ferry Services

- **Lovejoy Wharf (No. Station) to Seaport District** — Proposed by Mass. Convention Center Authority to be funded by six Seaport District companies; may begin April 2018.
- **East Boston to Long Wharf** — (In GoBoston 2030 plan but no City funding; 5–15 years out)
- **East Boston to Seaport District** — (In GoBoston 2030 plan but no City funding; 5–15 years out)
- **Everett (Wynn Casino) to Long Wharf** — Wynn Boston Harbor resort and casino will be open in 2019
- **Long Wharf to Quincy/Marina Bay** — Pilot service in 2017; 2018 service TBD



The Pioneer Institute's recent study, "Is it time to expand water transportation in Greater Boston?" suggests a network of ferry routes would be a very cost-effective initiative. The report says MBTA ferries have the second lowest subsidy per passenger mile and service can be implemented quickly.

Finally, Boston Harbor Now is in the middle of a nine-month comprehensive study (ending in March 2018) of ferry service in Boston Harbor being done by Steer Davies Gleave in partnership with KPFF Engineers, which will include current service as well as new or expanded routes with the highest potential.

Boston's Ferries & Water Taxi System



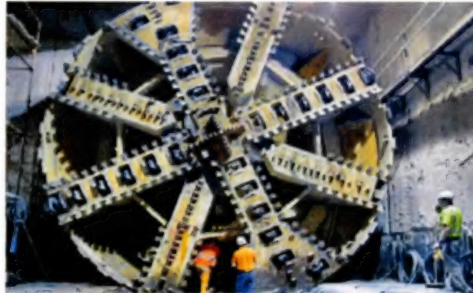
What the new \$1.5 million North-South Rail Link Study is supposed to accomplish

In 2014, the Mass. Legislature, responding to long-time advocate former Gov. Dukakis, former Gov. Weld and others, authorized funding for a re-study of the feasibility of a rail link connecting North and South stations (NSRL). MassDOT finally issued a Request for Proposals in 2017 and hired Arup USA in July 2017 to lead the \$1.5 million, eight-month study (that's \$47,000 a week).

Interest in a rail link is growing with 28 mayors, 36 State legislators and several business leaders are joining Congressman Seth Moulton in questioning if the proposed South Station Expansion Project (SSX) is the best way to increase track capacity to meet future (2035) high-speed, intercity, and commuter rail service needs. The SSX Environmental Assessment just got federal environmental clearance and the project is completing 25% plans, all of which cost \$42.5 million. The estimated cost of SSX is about \$2.3 billion if the cost of acquiring and relocating the adjoining US Post Office is included. Rep. Moulton claims SSX would relieve train congestion at South Station for only 10 years but NSRL would provide "at least 60% more capacity relief" and would help relieve congestion at North Station.

The purpose of the new North-South rail link study is to update work finished in 2003 and update existing conditions; clarify technical and financial realities; and help the Administration decide whether or not to advance concept further. The study tasks include:

1. **Identify changes to the NSRL context** (demographics; new transportation technologies and trends; changes to the built environment);
2. **Determine major elements of NSRL** (two tracks or four tracks; build a "Central Station" or not; what is the location of the North Portal; other station and headhouse locations);
3. **Identify right-of-way envelope** to inform future Boston-area development;
4. **Develop an order-of-magnitude cost estimate** (assume initial use of dual-mode locomotives with later transition to electric and informed by recent experience in rail tunnel construction); and



5. **Estimate the benefits of NSRL** including ridership growth, increased system capacity, operational efficiencies, air quality improvements and redevelopment opportunities.

At an October public meeting, MassDOT reviewed the existing conditions and what's changed since the previous North-South rail link study was done in the early 2000s, such as the region's 582,000 more residents and 472,000 new jobs. Tunneling technology has improved dramatically since the early 2000s, and Arup is studying "peer projects" that use tunnel boring machines (TBM, pictured). New York City's East Side Access project; Seattle's Alaska Viaduct project ("Bertha" TBM); Union Station, Los Angeles; and London's \$19.7 billion CrossRail project are being examined for comparison and costing.

Nine "Service Plans" are being studied for operating commuter rail:

- **No-Build:** projected changes to commuter rail with no expansions of North and South Stations.
- **Surface Only:** currently planned projects at both North and South Stations (and including an increase to hourly service during the off peak on all lines).
- **Aspirational Surface Only:** as much service as can be supported by the infrastructure.
- **Minimum Tunnel Service:** For the 2-track and 4-track alternatives, no expansions of North and South Stations; maintaining the projected level of service with

an hourly service increase in the off peak on all lines and use of dual-mode locomotives

- **Maximum Tunnel Service:** For the 2-track and 4-track alternatives, doubling peak service levels from Minimum Tunnel Service alternative; hourly off-peak service on all lines, no expansions of North and South Stations, and use of dual-mode locomotives.
- **Aspirational Tunnel Service:** For the 2-track and 4-track alternatives, as much service as can be supported by the infrastructure.

MassDOT will hold a couple more meetings before this study comes to a quick end at which point the Baker Administration will decide whether to study, study, study the potential project further or actually do something.

The Boston Informer City Explorer

*Boston Curiosities
I was
wondering...*

"What agency in Massachusetts is in charge of statewide planning and policy?"

Until 1979, the Massachusetts Office of State Planning was the statewide planning group for the Commonwealth. But State Planning was eliminated in 1979 and the problems caused by the void are easy to see. Massachusetts is an outlier because it lacks an office focused on statewide planning.

In 1935, a State Planning Board was established that shaped the growth, development and natural resource protection for the Commonwealth. In 1936, the Annual Report of the Board stated, "the Legislature needs a broad supply of facts, logically arranged and truly interpreted...." The State Planning Board was created and specifically instructed by the Legislature to find "all the available facts as to this State's present positing, outlook and needs and to report these facts in as clear as expressive a manner as possible, an integral step in a master plan for the beneficial development of the state."

In 1977 under then-Gov. Michael Dukakis and Director of State Planning Frank Keefe, the Massachusetts Office of State Planning issued the results of two-plus years of a comprehensive study for a Growth Policy Report. The report was submitted to the "Special Commission on the Effects of Growth Patterns on the Quality of Life in the Commonwealth." Some 5,000 members of local growth policy committees from 330 of the state's 351 cities and towns participated in the study as well as hundreds of interested citizens in preparing what was a "cutting edge" map for moving ahead with the necessary planning efforts to provide for a quality of life standard for the Commonwealth.

The trends at the time included rapid and ill-accommodated growth (Seaport Area without transportation plan prior to implementation), environmental degradation, loss of open space and historic assets, and a housing needs for all (lack of "affordable" housing statewide).



This 1950s planning map below the current Green Line being extended to Medford and beyond to Woburn along existing railroad rights of way..

Some of the recommendations from the Dukakis-Keefe era 40-year-old report were to continue highway maintenance and safety improvements but refrain from undertaking major new construction projects, accelerate completion of highway projects already committed, reform MBTA assessment formulas and revitalize commuter and freight rail service.

"The magnetism of Boston and its immediate neighbors as a cultural, educational, governmental and medical center is in little jeopardy. Indeed, some of Boston's inner neighborhoods have begun to attract substantial upper-income residential conversion and construction activity. But the continuing attractiveness of these same communities for the people who have grown up in them, and wonder about staying, is a fundamental concern of every city and town which participated in the growth policy process" (South End, Dorchester, Roxbury, East Boston, Charlestown, etc.).

"A consensus may be developing between urban and suburban/rural communities that a major proportion of future economic growth should be directed to urban areas." The growth policy report indicated "a multifaceted effort to coordinate state investment programs and ensure their efficient and equitable operation is underway" and the "state is pursuing a comprehensive economic development program coordinating public resources to stimulate and reinforce private investment and economic activity."

Boston Development Slowdown Beginning?

Could it be true that the Boston development market might be slowing down or shifting in the upcoming year? No one has a crystal ball to predict, but some events could indicate a cooling. Several developers have recently updated or reduced their plans including:

- Weiner Ventures' plan for two residential towers over the Mass-Pike at Massachusetts Avenue has been reduced to one tower with a reduction in numbers of units, removing the apartment building and reducing the height for the condo building;
- Samuels & Associates changed the development plans for 550 apartment units at Landmark Center in the Fenway to a 500,000 square foot office and lab building;
- The Peebles Corp. Viola Back Bay MassPike air rights project, awarded in November 2015, has not begun Boston Planning & Development and public review;
- HYM (Tom O'Brien, former BRA director) modified plans for Government Center Garage, replacing 118 apartments with 45 condos;
- Last year, Simon Properties scrapped plans for the 52-story residential tower at Copley Place citing high construction costs; and
- Equity Residential delayed the groundbreaking for the apartment building at the West End TD Garden site.

Required Reading:

We Can't Wish Our Way Out of This Mess

Three key studies released this year make the case that the region's transportation system isn't keeping up with Greater Boston jobs and population growth. Recommendations seem to take aim at the Baker Administration's "fix the MBTA before we add anything to expand the system" philosophy.

The Pioneer Institute's white paper, "Is it time to expand water transportation in Greater Boston?" identifies MBTA ferry services as a cost-effective part of the region's transportation system. Ferry service is so desired that a number of municipalities are starting their own even without state subsidy. The Institute notes the fare recovery ratio (68%) is the highest of any MBTA mode, and ferries have the second lowest subsidy per passenger mile at 41¢. Lack of action for years to expand the ferry network should be addressed. See <https://pioneerinstitute.org/news/study-ferry-service-provide-opportunity-mbta-expansion-without-huge-upfront-costs/>.

The State Legislature's "MassMoves" (<https://malegislature.gov/cc/Reports/massmoves-full-report-2017.pdf>) reports on work it did across the state to find out about shared values and priorities to help influence policy. Nine regions hosted 500 people to give input. Examples of what was learned: Despite the Administration's claims transit reliability is what people want most, statewide there is big demand for expanded transit in addition to improved reliability. On funding, 70% favor broad-based taxes while 62% prefer user fees (tolls, fares). And 78% were in favor of allowing cities and regions to raise money for transportation projects (e.g., sales tax for transit).

The Mass. Taxpayers Foundation ("Transportation in an Era of Transition," https://www.masstaxpayers.org/publications/transportation/20170927/transportation_era_transition_rethinking_resources) said it most directly: time to reconsider and reshape transportation policy. It looked at the 2007 Transportation Finance Committee's recommendations and concluded that despite spending more, transportation is still in bad shape. MTF says the state needs more data and better tools and guts to make difficult choices on spending. Borrowing will be more difficult now with Central Artery notes beginning repayment and debt service of \$2.9 billion through 2046. Revenues from gas tax are less certain than in the past, punctuating the argument for a new, comprehensive plan.



What's Up?

Back Bay/South End station update: The Boston Planning and Development Agency recently approved the Back Bay/South End Gateway Project, a three-building, 1.26 million mixed-use project at Back Bay/South End MBTA station. Since

Source: Pell Clarke Pell Architects



the Boston Properties development team filed the City's Project Notification Form in March 2016 and declared it a transformative, transit-oriented development project, the proposed project

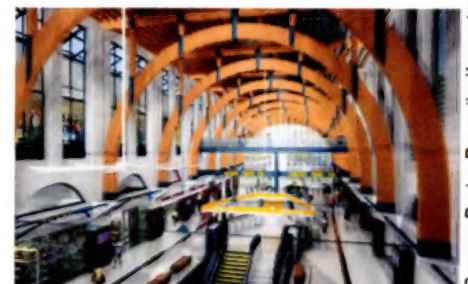
has advanced quickly through the City's review process. The project's Citizens Advisory Committee and outside stakeholders managed to challenge some project elements, but fundamentally the project is the same as in 2016. Two area churches concerned with damage from shadows, Trinity and New Old South churches along with other historic resources including the Public Library and YWCA, will divide \$3 million to help with "preservation needs."

Great uncertainty with the timing of the project. The sequence of new buildings to go up is up in the air. Only the MBTA station upgrades are pegged to a schedule.

Project elements:

- A 26-story office building above a reconfigured parking garage on Dartmouth Street;
- A 28-story residential building next to the YWCA on Clarendon Street where the garage exit drum is;
- A 35-story residential building behind the station, eliminating the Clarendon Street busway
- Widened sidewalks on Clarendon Street and Stuart Street where the 8-foot sidewalk is next to the high retaining wall
- New Dartmouth Street pedestrian conditions, including big planters next to the street reducing the sidewalk walking width
- Reconfigured station interior, adding retail and more retail and an upper level of more retail
- Rerouting the Rte. 39 bus (Copley-Forest Hills) to eliminate the direct, weather-protected connection to the station and creating a new layover near Trinity Church on St. James Avenue
- Hardscape plaza on the Clarendon Street busway with planters
- 90 off-site affordable units and \$3 million contribution to the Inclusionary Development Fund
- New accessible and more visible entrance to the station from Stuart Street with retail along the path to the station
- New restrooms in the station (complete)

Proposed Back Bay/South End MBTA station makeover. MassDOT's agreement with Boston Properties requires station improvements and ongoing maintenance. Developer makes money off the station retail. ▶



Source: Boston Properties/Arrowstreet

THE BOSTON INFORMER

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Welcome to The Boston Informer

The goal is simple: Provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to The Boston Informer!

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BPDA approved an 18-month 'Additional Dwelling Units (ADU)' pilot program for self-contained, non-transient residential units inside existing, owner-occupied buildings....



**Solving the housing crisis
one closet at a time**

You Were Asking

Q. I noticed bike lanes at Mass. Ave. at Columbus Ave. and Columbia Road between Dorchester Ave. and Boston St. They look hazardous for vehicles and bikers! Columbia Road now has only one driving lane inbound which does not allow inbound traffic to access the through traffic lane. The Columbus Ave. bike lane goes right through the drop-off zone for the Harriet Tubman House. Is there a plan for these "pop-up" changes?

A: Good question.

Q: I see Boston changed the speed limit to 25 mph part of its Vision Zero campaign. Recently I noticed signs within the City indicating 30 mph as the speed limit. Which is correct?

A: Both. The new City default speed limit on streets with no posted speed limit is 25 mph. State roads including DCR and MassDOT did not change, and City streets such as Blue Hill Avenue, posted for 30 mph and 35 mph, did not change. You're looking for a consistent approach to safety?

Q. Is the BRA still really the BRA?

A. Yes. The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) is still legally the BRA. The new name it adopted, Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), is only a "doing business as" moniker. The powers BRA accumulated still belong to it as the BRA, and it is still the BRA for all Urban Renewal purposes. Shirley Kressel gave us these details and we believe her.

Q. Most BPDA planning studies don't include analysis of transportation impacts of development. BPDA leaves it up to developers to look at transportation during Article 80 review. Isn't this giving away the store?

A. Yes. If the City looked at transportation it could provide objective analyses of impacts and not rely on developers. The BRA used to have transportation planners (moved to Transportation Dept. under Mayor Flynn).

PEOPLE MOVERS

Luis Ramirez, former General Electric executive, is the new MBTA General Manager.

Christine Poff, former head of the Franklin Park Coalition to director of Boston's Community Preservation Committee.

David Anderson, P.E., from MassDOT Deputy Highway Chief Engineer to HNTB.

Dennis Baker, P.E., from HNTB to WSP.

Matthew Ciborowski, from MassDOT to Arup.

Dan Grabauskas, former MBTA General Manager and executive director of the Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation, is "executive director" of MBTA commuter rail as a consultant for \$30,000 per month.

Meera Deean, from Utile Architecture and Planning to director of planning at Boston Harbor Now.

Peter Zuk, former Central Artery/Tunnel director, is chief capital officer for the Toronto regional transit agency.

Tom Tinlin, from MassDOT Highway to Howard Stein Hudson director of Institutional and Private Markets.

Rosalin Acosta, from senior VP at Enterprise Bank to Mass. Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development.